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DE RUEHSG #0109 0371549
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FM AMEMBASSY SANTIAGO
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 4397
INFO RUEHAC/AMEMBASSY ASUNCION 3756
RUEHBO/AMEMBASSY BOGOTA 2275
RUEHBU/AMEMBASSY BUENOS AIRES 1271
RUEHBR/AMEMBASSY BRASILIA 0668
RUEHCV/AMEMBASSY CARACAS 1935
RUEHPE/AMEMBASSY LIMA 5944
RUEHMN/AMEMBASSY MONTEVIDEO 4211
RUEHQT/AMEMBASSY QUITO 2134
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHDC
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC
RUEATRS/DEPT OF TREASURY WASHDC
RUCPDOG/DEPT OF COMMERCE WASHDC

UNCLAS SANTIAGO 000109

SIPDIS

STATE FOR R/MR, I/PP, WHA/BSC, WHA/PDA, INR/IAA

E.O. 12958: N/A

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SUBJECT: CHILE MEDIA REPORT - FEBRUARY 6

Leading Stories

1. Dailies highlighted figures released by the Central Banks that economic growth for the last quarter of 2008 amounted to 1.1% of GDP, the lowest in six years. Coverage included another case of a falsely-identified disappearance victim from the Military government era.

U.S.-Related News

2. All dailies reported that The New York Times (NYT) ran a new article on the Chilean salmon industry and the effects of the ISA virus. They concur that although the NYT article acknowledges that the government and the salmon industry have made progress in resolving the outbreak of the virus, it questions the effectiveness of these efforts by quoting critics who say that "the problems persist." FDA reports of last year's inspection shows that salmon producers continue to use chemicals and medication banned in the United States. Dailies also inform that an FDA delegation will come to Chile in March to work with its counterparts -- Sernapesca -- on the issue.

3. Editorial: "No one foresaw that Obama's image would receive such a strong blow in his first days in office.... The first surprise was Timothy Geithner... then Nancy Killefer... and Tom Daschle.... In the latter case, Obama resorted to charm for which he is literally adored. 'I screwed up,' he said.... But observers are already beginning to ask themselves if the President is the kind of man who makes mistakes with alarming frequency in the choice of his advisors, or if it is simply that he has nowhere from where to pick, because the entire U.S. 'political class' suffers from committing minors sins or corruption? ... Thus far Obama has shown he is an explicit and tough critic of himself and only time will tell how long the efficiency of that response can last... (because) the mass media... have shown that the 'Obamania' of the campaign and the swearing-in does not mean unconditional support" (La Segunda, conservative, afternoon, circ. 33,000, 2/5).

Economic growth

4. The Imacec puts GDP growth at 1.1% for the last quarter of 2008, which is the lowest since 1998 (El Mercurio, conservative, influential newspaper-of-record, circ. 129,000; Diario Financiero, business and financial, 2/5).

Human Rights

15. The UDI party will request Human Rights Watch to intercede before foreign governments that presumably protect individuals sentenced by Chile's courts of justice for the murder of Senator Jaime Guzman, founder of the party (La Nacion, government-owned, editorially independent, circ 4,200, 2/5).

SIMONS